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**New Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Online Form Speeds up Claims for Self-Employed Oregonians**

**July 17, 2020 (Salem, Ore.)**—Today the [Oregon Employment Department](#), in partnership with Google, launched a new Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) online form that will make it easier for Oregonians to apply. The form will also allow the more than 100,000 mostly self-employed Oregonians who have applied for PUA to get their weekly benefit payments faster.

“When I took on this role, I made fixing the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance application issue a top priority because we knew it was impacting our ability to get claims processed quickly,” said David Gerstenfeld, acting director of the Oregon Employment Department. “Although the PUA program was set up in just under a month, the temporary solution, a PDF application, was cumbersome and prone to errors. This new form will fix many of the previous issues and help get benefits into the hands of Oregonians more quickly.”

The three major improvements are:

- **Speeding up weekly benefit processing.** People seeking PUA benefits are required to submit a weekly certification to get benefits. Automating the weekly certification process will help get them processed faster and more accurately. The previous highly manual process was time- and resource-intensive and meant weeks of delays.
- **Improved submission success.** The fully automated form will ensure applications are received with complete information, which will speed up claims processing. The temporary PDF solution meant that some forms were mistakenly being submitted blank.
- **Ensuring all required information is complete prior to submission.** The form will give a warning notifying people that the information is required. This change will help us process claims faster and reduce delays in Oregonians receiving benefits due to missing information. Important information, such as the COVID-19 reason that makes an applicant eligible for PUA, is required, but has often been missing or left blank on the PDF forms.

People should resubmit their weekly claims through the new form if they have not already been paid for those weeks, though they do not have to. Doing so will speed up how quickly they get their benefits, and will let claims specialists focus on claims for people who have not yet received their benefits.

“This is an encouraging step forward for Oregonians who’ve been waiting for benefits, as well as for the Department. I am pleased we have made these changes and pledge that we will continue finding better ways to serve you,” Gerstenfeld said.

The Department is committed to ensuring equity for all Oregonians and will be translating the application into 15 different languages. Those translated applications will be available in the next week.

In addition to the new application, the Department launched a new informational website on July 10, [unemployment.oregon.gov](https://unemployment.oregon.gov), which will also be available in 15 languages in the coming weeks. The application and the website are part of the Department’s efforts to significantly improve the overall customer service experience and improve the speed at which claims can be processed.

PUA applications, also known as initial claims, will still need to be reviewed by a claims specialist; that will now be easier to do. Claims require review to ensure applicants are eligible under the federal CARES Act and to determine a person’s weekly benefit amount. Weekly PUA claims filed through the new online form will auto-process, sending a person either the \$205 per week minimum benefit, or a higher weekly benefit amount--up to a maximum of \$648 per week.

[To get more than \\$205 per week](#), a person must have earned more than \$16,480 in the 2019 tax year. They have to provide proof of income for their most recently completed tax year (2019 for most people). A PUA benefits calculator can be found [here](#).

Oregonians who are applying for or receiving benefits can access the new PUA online claim form by going to the Employment Department’s [Online Claim System](#) and clicking on the blue “Pandemic Unemployment Assistance” button--the same place they went previously to upload their PDF claim forms.

People can continue submitting their initial application and weekly certifications by PDF upload, mail, fax or phone if they wish. These will take longer to process than the online claim form.

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